



When he adhered to neutrality despite the bitterness of historical memory

## The morals of King Abdulaziz during World War I contradicts the bad nature of the Ottomans and their malicious policy

In the year 1915, the First World War, with all its evil and pain, spread an atmosphere of anguish and bitterness. The Ottomans, who relied so much on their former reputation as an Empire, that spread its influence reached to central Europe began to recede and the emperor has been considered the sick man. It, also, did not succeed in staying in the neutral zone between the Axis Powers and the Allies, and their involvement in the war was more of like someone who killed himself. To explain, the regions, the Ottomans colonized, were stripped from them one after the other, as well as the countries, they abandoned, voluntarily, in failed deals for the sake of preserving their declining Ottoman Empire. Libya, Tunisia and Algeria were sold to France, Italy, and Palestine to the English. Still that was not but a mere price for the horrible crimes and their lack of deep understanding of the grumbling of the peoples, who were exhausted by their occupation, and foretelling their yearn to expel them.

### The Saudis... and hope

In the middle of the Arabian Peninsula and at the beginning of 1916, King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud had recaptured Najd and Al-Ahsa, and was on his way to unite the outskirts of the Arabian Peninsula and include them in his homeland. Those quick achievements made by the young king pushed the great and regional powers, surrounding the Arabian Peninsula, to pay attention to his influence and the size of his rapid and decisive achievement. Therefore, King Abdulaziz was able to gain recognition by the British and Ottomans of the influence of his emerging state.


**The founder's pivotal policy overcame the expansion of international forces, and preserved the gains during the unification stage.**


### The situation in the Arabian Peninsula and the repercussions of the First World War

Overnight, Medina became the scene of the third of the Arab liberation battles against the Ottoman occupier in (1914) and beyond. After King Abdulaziz was able to unite Al Qassim and Al-Ahsa after expelling the Ottomans from them. Such great victory, motivated the Arabs to quickly get rid of the Ottoman occupier. Hence, this has turned Medina to a battlefield, in which the battle lasted for a long time against the Turkish Fakhri Pasha, yet ended with his expulsion together with his Turkish garrison from the Arabian Peninsula.

### The King and the Uniting Strategy

King Abdul Aziz adhered to the kind of views, that he was raised upon and worked for. He aimed to unite above all else, and believed that the peoples are the ones that should rule, manage their own affairs, and solve their differences and problems without any foreign interference in their country. All the founder's efforts, treaties, correspondences and alliances were laying the brick in the path of unifying the Saudi homeland on the Arabian Peninsula. Therefore, he did not surrender to the Ottomans' attempts to drag him into their losing war and weak alliances, while, at the same time, they were trying to disrupt the Saudi national project by supporting his opponents and enemies from all sides.

### The founder's foretelling future events

King Abdulaziz spared his homeland the scourge of World War I (1918-1914), forming a position, through which he managed to protect his countrymen and unite their word. The founder sent several letters to the local governors and rulers in the Arabian Peninsula, inviting them to adhere to unity after the dangerous developments and repercussions, following the outbreak of world war. Yet, no one responded, and the responses were varied and contradictory, preferring self-interest and personal position of the conflicting forces over the public interest, as King Abdulaziz wanted to do.

Historian Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli describes this insightful initiative by King Abdulaziz, "The invitation did not succeed, but those who knew its value got notified. The British took the initiative to inform the King that they were his neighbors and that they wanted to reach an understanding with him. The Germans, through their Ottoman allies, sent similar messages. However, Abdulaziz retained his neutrality."

### Founder's Policy Themes:

First: on the national level, King Abdulaziz began consolidating his authority over Najd and Al-Ahsa. Security was restored in both of them after they were subject to chaos and failure under the Ottoman administration in Al-Qassim and Al-Ahsa, hence, turning them into model of rapid stability that prompted other towns, tribes, and territories to correspond with him and join under his banner.

Second: on the Arabian Peninsula level, the king utilized his wisdom and a far-sighted view in dealing with his neighbors. But their actions, grave mistakes and fragile political positions enabled the young king, who believes in unity, to become the only alternative choice to recover all Saudi territories.

Third: on the international level, King Abdulaziz had an aptitude to foretell and analyze international changes, and politics, and knew how to move his country through the rugged paths of international conditions during the balances of World War I, especially because the war was global, that no one had any previous experience of such thing. Those great powers had routes of supply and influence that surrounded the Arabian Peninsula, and any collision with it means entering into a confrontation that they may not be able to stand.

The Ottomans tried to compensate for their losses in Europe, the Caucasus and Armenia by rushing towards the Arabian Peninsula, and keeping it under their occupation, while the island was trying to break free and rise from a slump that lasted for centuries under the pressure of Ottoman colonialism. And part of those Ottoman efforts was directed towards British influence, the enemy of the Germans. To explain, the Turks paid a heavy price for their alliance with the Germans, and for not realizing the consequences, as they chose the losing side in most of their wars, including the First World War.

The Ottomans tried to get King Abdulaziz to take their side in the First World War against the allies, and to support the Ottoman military effort, and to write to their governors and independent rulers, but that came too late, as the Turks had gone too far in the crimes they have committed in the Arabian peninsula, and how much they have dealt with brutality and tyranny. Hence, they had to pay for their domination over the Arab nation, and what it suffered from the scourge of mercenaries and Turkish protectorates.

The international situation was difficult for politicians, yet, as for the founding king, his country started to unite, even if the rest of the provinces are still chaotic, because of the Ottoman governors. Therefore, in his quest to restore his kingdom, he dealt with great prudence, patience and cunning. Here, his wisdom emerges, in dealing with each situation separately, so as not to squander the gains, nor rushing with anyone. And at the same time, despite the weakness of the Ottoman Empire, King Abdulaziz did not fight the Sultan, and did not stand in the side of the allies, but rather dealt with them as required by the interests of his country, and the people in the territories, he recovered. During the war period, the king remained neutral despite the bitterness that everyone experienced from the Ottoman occupier, but the king dealt with them throughout the period of World War I, with his morals not theirs.

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